

Fun and Free in D.C.: A Parent's Guide to Maintaining Student Achievement

Did you know research shows that all children lose approximately two months of math and reading skills during the summer? This means teachers have to review old material from September to November when your child returns to school.

Summer is a time when you can maintain the academic gains your child has made. D.C. has many free, fun and easy activities you can do with your children to keep them engaged, curious and using their academic skills.

Do something every day with an educational focus to maintain academic achievement this summer. You'll see the rewards in September.

Make it Fun for Your Child – And Easy on You

The purpose of summer learning is not to “extend the school year” but to provide your child with different ways of using what they've learned, explore what they like, and nurture the sense of wonder and curiosity that fuels a lifelong love of learning.

As you review this guide, there are some simple ways you can create a fun, meaningful set of activities:

Talk to your children about what they enjoyed the most and least about the school year. Ask “why?” You may discover a hidden passion or an area that needs more support.

Ask and identify what your children would like to know more about.

Set some learning goals such as how many books will your children read, how much will they exercise, how often will they do math skill-builders, what creative things will they do?

Complete the DCPS Summer Learning Packets that were designed to help your child practice critical skills and remember key points. The packets will be available on line. (If your child needs help solving some of the problems, they



Michael DeAngelis – Students at Scott Montgomery



Bel Perez Gabilondo – Students at H.D. Cooke

can access online tutors through the D.C. Public Library Web site under “Kids,” “homework help,” “tutors.com.”)

Plan an outing. It can be in the neighborhood, in the District, out of town, or even a “virtual trip.” The goal is to provide your child with an experience connected to what they are learning or exploring in print.

“Link It.” You can use a single point of interest to generate multiple learning opportunities for your child. Here’s how: Identify your children’s interests; help them select books in that interest area; find an activity to attend related to the topic. Your children also can read a book and then watch the TV or movie adaptation, then tell you the similarities and differences.

INCLUDE READING EVERY DAY

Reading everyday helps your child become a better reader. The more you encourage your child to read and emphasize the importance of reading, the more you are helping to maintain and boost your child’s literacy skills.

- In the morning: Have your child read whatever’s on hand – cereal box, recipe book, magazine, a book.
- In the afternoon: Set aside at least 20 – 30 minutes to have your child read a book.
- In the evening: Ask your child to tell you what they read. This is a great time to use “constructed response.” (see below)
- Go to a D.C. Public Library: Maximize your visit to the library, check out few books at a time.
- Pick up and read a newspaper or magazine

Suggestions

- Talk to your children about what they are interested in and help them select books in those topic areas. This helps ensure that your child is engaged in the process.
- For struggling readers, consider getting a copy of a book and an audio book. You also can ask a librarian for books that would be appropriate for your struggling reader.
- Read with your children or have them read to you.

INCLUDE MATH EVERY DAY

Children use math every day – even if they don’t know it. Luckily, we do and there are some ways of helping children increase the amount of “math work” they do daily.

- Practice math facts (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division). Have them design their own flash cards.



Bel Perez Gabilondo – Students at Deal MS

- Ask your children to track daily temperatures. Ask them to determine how much the temperature varies each day and the average temperature for the week?
- Have your children help prepare a snack or meal. Have them measure ingredients, count items and read directions or food packages.
- When in a store, ask your children to record the costs of items.
- Younger children can be the “timekeepers” for an activity. Practice different ways of asking them the time and having them tell you the time.
- Ask your child to track sports statistics.
- Encourage your children to play with their food! Help them count items on their plate, look at the food in terms of fractions, addition, or subtraction.
- Play games. Card games and board games encourage children to use math, strategy and logic.

INCLUDE HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The following are simple ways to keep your children - and you - happy and healthy:

- Encourage or take your children on a walk, jog, or ride;
- Have a dance break! Any type of music - anywhere, anytime;
- Visit a recreation center;
- Visit a farmers market. D.C. now has 18 farmers markets in all areas of the District; and
- Cook healthy and nutritious snacks and meals. Visit the DCPS website for some simple recipes.

INCLUDE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Did you know some of the world’s top musicians are here in our city? The premier military bands, orchestras and choirs are filled with phenomenal musicians who perform every week during the summer. You can find their schedules here:

Air Force: www.usafband.af.mil/events/index.asp

Army: www.usarmyband.com/event-calendar.html

Marines: www.marineband.usmc.mil/

Navy: www.navyband.navy.mil/

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts gives free performances 6 p.m. daily on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage: www.kennedy-center.org/programs/millennium/.

The National Parks Service has a listing of concerts that are taking place throughout the National Capital Region, including Wolf Trap Farm Park, Carter



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Barron Amphitheatre, Fort Hunt and Fort DuPont (most concerts are free):

www.nps.gov/ncro/publicaffairs/summerinthecity.htm.

Museums

The Smithsonian museums provide a wide variety of free exhibits that appeal to almost any interest – or for you to help your child to develop.

Turn a visit to the museum into an adventure. Let your children pick a museum, then look at what exhibits they can visit.

Identify topics in which your child is interested and look for an exhibit or museum program that matches the interest. Want your child to learn more American History? Take them to see portraits of American presidents, civil rights pioneers, or the Elvis exhibit in the National Portrait Gallery; see a 200-year-old American flag and learn about the “Star Spangled Banner”; visit the American History Museum and discover how transportation has evolved in the United States; or tour the American Indian Museum and learn more about Native Americans.

For tips on how to plan a trip to the museums, visit www.smithsonianeducation.org/families//at_the_smithsonian/at_the_smithsonian.html.

ENCOURAGE SELF-PACED LEARNING

Some children, especially those who are older, may enjoy learning about a variety of subjects on their own.

Individual Graduation Portfolio (IGP)

This is a great online academic and career-planning resource available to all DCPS students in grades 6 -12. The IGP provides students with information about their academic records and courses, and provides online tools to help students build skills and do long range planning for college or careers.

Parents do not have their own logins; your children must provide you their password. To access the IGP:

- Go to www.dcps.bridges.com
- Enter your portfolio name and password
Your portfolio name is DCPS followed by your ID number example,
Portfolio Name: DCPS12345678
Initial Password: DCPS * Change your password once you log in! *

Learning Express Library (LEL)

The LEL helps your child learn about a variety of topics online through interactive tutorials. Content areas cover all levels of education (elementary through college and career prep), Advance Placement practice exams and computer skills. You will need a library card to access this site:

www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm/?HR=http://www.dclibrary.org/

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Online Tutoring

Online tutoring is available for students in elementary through high school and covers math, science, English, social studies and AP materials. To access the service go to www.dclibrary.org/teens/homework. You will need to enter your D.C. library card number to access the site.

Be sure to visit www.dcps.dc.gov to get the complete guide!